

## **AIMS Grade 6 Writing Sample Test and Think-Throughs**

# Grade 6

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## Introduction

AIMS sample tests are provided to give students experience in taking AIMS. The tests are not meant to be practice tests, but they offer a sample of the kinds of questions students will find on AIMS. The best way to make sure you have the knowledge necessary to Meet and Exceed on AIMS is to be in class, be prepared, and be on time to class each day. Learning in class and through completing homework is the basis of meeting proficiency on AIMS.

It is understandable that sometimes students get nervous when taking tests. They may need some help with test-taking strategies. In this document, you will not only be able to take an AIMS sample test for writing, but you will also find that some of the items have explanations of the process used for answering them. This will help you think through the items, just like you do in class. There are also two AIMS Writing responses with explanations of why they received the scores they have.

As you go through the sample test, please remember a few important facts.

- The AIMS Writing Sample Tests follow the AIMS Writing Blueprint for the 2004 Writing Academic Standards, but only represent one-third the number of items that are on the actual AIMS 3-8 and AIMS HS assessments.
- The best way to study for AIMS is to be sure you know and are able to do the grade-level performance objectives in each content area tested. Your teacher creates your lessons based on all of these grade-level writing standards.
- The activities contained in this document will give you experience in taking AIMS. It is not a practice test. Practice by completing the assignments your teacher gives you.
- Work through the sample test as if you were taking AIMS so you experience answering items in a test-like setting. Don't use support materials that are not allowed when taking AIMS.

When you look at answers for the sample items, you will also see the Strand, Concept, and Performance Objective that is being measured listed on the Answer Key. This is listed so you can see how it connects to the lessons your teacher creates from the Arizona Academic Standards. Read through the sample Think-Throughs and see how your thoughts and answers compare to the examples offered here.

The guide will help you make better response choices based on the knowledge that mastery of the grade-level standard provides.

Good luck and have fun!

**AIMS Grade 6 Writing Sample Test**

**Writing  
Sample Test**

**Grade 6**

**Directions:** Read the paragraph and then answer numbers 1 through 4.

(1) Adventurous mountain climbers attempt to ascend Mt. Everest each year, but only a handful succeeds in reaching the top. (2) This is the highest mountain in the world. (3) It is over 29,000 feet from sea level. (4) One man who did succeed is Jon Krakauer. (5) More recently, a team of four climbers reached the top of Everest in 2009. (6) The group included Peter Whitaker who is the nephew of Jim Whitaker, the first American to reach the summit. (7) The older Whitaker climbed the mountain in 1963.

1 Read the sentence.

He made his ascent in 1996.

What is the **best** place for this sentence?

- A between sentences 1 and 2
- B between sentences 3 and 4
- C between sentences 4 and 5
- D between sentences 6 and 7

2 Which detail **best** supports the topic of the paragraph?

- A Whitaker wrote letters to his wife every day.
- B Krakauer wrote an account of his trek called *Into Thin Air*.
- C Some people who fail to reach the top write news articles.
- D All climbers who reach the top write books about the adventure.

3 What is the **best** way to combine sentences 2 and 3?

- A Being 29,000 feet above sea level, the highest mountain in the world.
- B This is the highest mountain in the world over 29,000 feet from sea level.
- C This is the highest mountain in the world but it is over 29,000 feet from sea level.
- D At more than 29,000 feet above sea level, this is the highest mountain in the world.

Go On 

4 Which sentence **best** concludes the paragraph?

- A Now you know about Mt. Everest.
- B Why don't you try to climb Mt. Everest?
- C The world's tallest mountain continues to challenge climbers.
- D Jim Whitaker will try to climb faster than his nephew next year.

**Directions:** Read the paragraph and answer numbers 5 and 6.

(1) Congratulations! (2) You are producing the next energy source for cars. (3) Algae, the green stuff that grows in your fish tank, are now being grown and picked to turn into oil. (4) Algae can burn in car engines just like gasoline. (5) Burning fuel made from algae does not pollute the air as gasoline and oil do. (6) Scientists at Arizona State University are making progress in producing algae as an alternative fuel source. (7) One day, you may drive into a fuel station and pump algae into your car's tank!

5 Which sentence is the **best** beginning for this paragraph?

- A Are you concerned about cars that pollute the air?
- B Do you have any ideas for growing alternative fuel?
- C Are you saving electricity to use as fuel for your car?
- D Do you have a fish tank that is always turning green?

6 What is a more specific and powerful word to replace picked in sentence 3?

- A ground
- B harvested
- C layered
- D scattered

Go On 

**Directions:** Now read and answer numbers 7 through 9.

**7** Read the sentence.

Mrs. Sands always quoted from *The Three Little Pigs* when she knocked on our door, I'll huff, I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down!

What is the correct way to punctuate the quotation in this sentence?

- A** "I'll huff, I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down!"
- B** "I'll huff, I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down!"
- C** "I'll huff," "I'll puff," and "I'll blow your house down!"
- D** correct as is

**8** Read the sentence.

I welcome your visit on Monday next week.

What is the **best** way to rewrite this sentence in a friendly letter to your friend?

- A** Next week on Monday you will visit me!
- B** I am so excited to see you next Monday!
- C** You will visit me on Monday of next week.
- D** Monday is the day I will see you next week.

**Go On** 

**9** Read the sentence.

While riding their skateboards through the park yesterday, Damon and Angel performing tricks.

What is the correct way to write this sentence?

- A** Damon and Angel performs tricks while riding their skateboards through the park yesterday.
- B** While riding their skateboards through the park yesterday, Damon and Angel performs tricks.
- C** While riding their skateboards through the park yesterday, Damon and Angel performed tricks.
- D** Damon and Angel performing tricks while riding their skateboards through the park yesterday.



## Grade 6 AIMS Writing Sample Test Answer Key

The Answer Key below shows you the Strand, Concept, and Performance Objective that each item is addressing. This will help you and your teacher to identify which Concepts from the Arizona Academic Writing Standard that you may need to study more.

1	2.2.3	C
2	2.1.2	B
3	2.5.1	D
4	2.2.6	C
5	2.2.2	D
6	2.4.1	B
7	2.6.3	B
8	2.3.3	B
9	2.6.13	C

## AIMS Grade 6 Writing Think-Throughs

The items on the next few pages are from the sample test you just finished. They have been worked out for you to show the thought process behind finding the answers.

As you go through them, see how your thoughts compare to the ones given. Not every item from the sample test will be shown in this same way.

The number for each item matches the same number that is in the sample test. This way, if you got the item incorrect, you can compare your answers and go back to see what you may have done differently.

Then, after the Think-Through items, you will find an exemplar paper at score point 4 and one at score point 6. Study these papers and the annotations that go with each. If you want to look at more exemplar papers, ask your teacher for the web address where other annotated papers for your grade level are posted.



## Selected Items with Think-Throughs

1 Read the sentence.

He made his ascent in 1996.

What is the **best** place for this sentence?

I noticed that the sentence has a date, and a chronological organization is one way to write a paragraph. I will look at each answer choice to see if the date “1996” is a clue to help me. Also, I notice the pronoun “he” and that means a person will be mentioned before the new sentence.

**Answer A** says “between sentences 1 and 2.” I will reread both sentences. Sentence 1 is the introductory sentence and sentence 2 tells me that Mt. Everest is the “highest mountain in the world.” Mt. Everest is not a “he,” so the new sentence makes no sense between 1 and 2. Also, I can’t tell if the new sentence is right chronologically because no dates have been stated in sentences 1 and 2. I will move on to the next answer. Answer A is not correct.

**Answer B** says “between sentences 3 and 4.” I will reread both sentences. Sentence 3 is about how high the mountain is, and sentence 4 introduces Jon Krakaur. Neither sentence has a date, so I can’t use chronology as a clue. Also a sentence with “he” would not be used before the man is named in sentence 4. Choice B is not the correct answer.

**Answer C** says “between sentences 4 and 5.” I already know that sentence 4 introduces Jon Krakauer. I will reread sentence 5. This sentence is telling about a team of climbers reaching the top in 2009. So I have a person and a date to use. Jon Krakauer is most likely the “he,” and 1996 does come before 2009. I think this might be the correct answer because sentence 5 begins with “More recently,” which refers to the date 2009 that comes after, or more recently than 1996. I will go on to the next answer to be sure.

**Answer D** says “between sentences 6 and 7.” After I reread both sentences, I know that “he” might be Jim Whitaker. Sentence 7 has the date 1963, so if the paragraph is in chronological order, this new sentence would be out of order with the date 1996. Also, sentence 7 tells me that Jim Whitaker climbed the mountain in 1963, so Jim Whitaker can’t be the “he.”

In fact, the dates are not chronological in the paragraph, so I can’t use chronology as a clue. But I can go back to answer C and see that the words “More recently” do refer to a date. The “he” is Jon Krakauer. The “team” in sentence 5 climbed the mountain in 2009 and that is recent. It is “More recently” than 1996. Now I am sure that **Answer C is correct.**

**5** Which sentence is the **best** beginning for this paragraph?

I will reread the paragraph. It is about algae, the green stuff that grows in fish tanks, being used as gas for cars as alternative fuel. This paragraph also says that algae does not pollute the air when it is burned. Since this will be the first sentence of the paragraph, it will probably be one that gets the reader's attention, but it will also have to make sense with sentence 1, "Congratulations!" and sentence 2 that says the reader is producing a new energy source for cars.

**Answer A** asks if I am concerned about cars polluting the air. The paragraph tells about an alternative fuel that doesn't pollute the air, so this might be a good beginning. But the question doesn't fit with sentence 2 that says the reader is producing a new energy source for cars. This does not make sense to me. Being concerned isn't producing anything. I will read on to see if there is a better answer.

**Answer B** asks if I have ideas about growing alternative fuel. I could be congratulated for thinking up ideas, but sentence 2 says I am producing fuel. This is not true. Having ideas alone can't produce fuel. I don't think this is the right answer.

**Answer C** asks if I am saving electricity to use as fuel. It is an attention-getter question and I could be congratulated for that. I know that some cars can run on electricity, but the paragraph doesn't mention electricity. I don't think this is the best answer.

**Answer D** asks if I have a fish tank that turns green. While it is a question that gets my attention, I don't think I can be congratulated for having a green fish tank. Fish don't have anything to do with burning fuel that doesn't pollute. But if I look further into the paragraph, sentence 3 tells me that algae are the "green stuff that grows in your fish tank." If I have a green fish tank, I must be growing algae. So I can be congratulated for growing an alternative fuel source!

**Answer D is the correct choice** because it is a question so it gets the reader's attention, I could be congratulated for having algae growing because it is used to make gas that doesn't pollute, and the paragraph tells about scientists producing algae as alternative fuel.

**7** Read the sentence.

Mrs. Sands always quoted from *The Three Little Pigs* when she knocked on our door, I'll huff, I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down!

What is the correct way to punctuate the quotation in this sentence?

This question is asking about using quotation marks to punctuate quoted sentences. Quotation marks are used to show that a sentence is being quoted from a book and *The Three Little Pigs* is a book. I know that quotation marks are used in pairs, one at the beginning and one at the end of the quotation. I also know that all other punctuation has to be inside the quotation marks. So, I will look at each answer and check for these things.

**Answer A** has only one half of the pair, at the beginning of the sentence. Quotation marks are always used in pairs. This is not correct.

**Answer B** has quotation marks used in pairs, and the words inside the marks are the quoted text. The exclamation point is inside the quotation marks. I think this is correct, but I get confused about whether this end mark goes inside or outside of the quotation marks. I'll read on to see if another answer helps me clear up my confusion.

**Answer C** uses a pair of quotation marks around each of the actions instead of everything Mrs. Sands says. The other punctuation is inside the quotation marks including the exclamation point. Seeing the commas and exclamation points inside the quotation marks makes me remember that these punctuation marks do go inside the quotation marks. This answer is not correct because the quotations marks are around only the actions, not everything Mrs. Sands says.

Since **Answer D** is "correct as is," and the original sentence has no quotation marks, I believe that **Answer B is correct** because now I am sure that the end mark goes inside the quotation marks.

## Extended AIMS Writing Response

On the next few pages, you will find student writing samples that have been scored with the AIMS Holistic Rubric Based on 6 Traits. There are also annotations, or explanations, that tell why the paper earned the score it has been given. Read the papers and the annotations to understand the qualities that a score point 4 paper (Meets) and a score point 6 paper (Exceeds) have.

### Grade 6 Prompt

Think of a time when you were helpful.

Write a story in which you describe what you did and how being helpful made you feel.

Read the score point 4 and score point 6 papers on the next pages. The papers are followed with an explanation of the skills that are shown in each.

## Grade 6 Student paper scored with the Holistic Rubric Based on 6 Traits

## Score Point 4

## Final Copy

One day I signed up for a fun Eagle project with my troop, 474. We were going to Papago Park to fix up the demolished trails and make them look beautiful. It was on Sunday, so we didn't have to go to school. We got there at about 10 a.m. and then hiked to where we were going to work on the trails. People brought rakes, wheelbarrows, shovels, and gloves. I got started raking away all of the debris out from the middle of the trail. We either picked it all up or let it stay there. Then we started to put some rocks along the trail to make it look somewhat like nature. We even put some rocks around some plants, so no one could step on them. After that we took a journey down into a wash nearby and saw all of the leftover brush on the sides of it. We then got some tools and pulled away the brush. All of us were trying to stop the wash from flooding and, so no one would go down there. While we were doing that, some people had to pick up all of the dirty trash we found. (What a gross job!) Then we all took a cool and refreshing water break. Once we were all finished, Jordan, who put together this

## Final Copy

whole thing, took a big snapshot of our finished trail. We then all cheered and gathered all of our tools. At that time I felt like I did something right. Like I actually did something really good for the society. That was the best feeling I had all day! Then we all followed the gorgeous trail back to the parking lot. I wasn't expecting to get a reward, but what do you know, they got us pizza! I stayed after and ate with my friends. Then I went home thinking about how much a difference I made.

**Grade 6 Score Point 4, page 3**

This writer has clearly presented and developed ideas about a project to make the trails in Papago Park “look beautiful.” The story has a beginning “One day I signed up for a fun Eagle project with my troop, 474.” and an ending “Then I went home thinking about how much a difference I made.” although neither is particularly inviting to the reader.

Details are offered throughout the story. The reader learns about the equipment “People brought rakes, wheel barrows, shovels, and gloves.” and the work that the writer performed. “I got started raking away all the debris out from the middle of the trail.” “We then got some tools and pulled away the brush.” However, one confusing idea causes the reader to wonder: “We either picked it all up or let it stay there.” More clarity is needed here. Why is the “debris” left on the side of the trail?

One other confusion arises later when the writer is telling about cleaning brush from the wash. “All of us were trying to stop the wash from flooding and, so no one would go down there.” The reader is not sure what this means. More explanation is needed to clarify this part of the story.

The story is organized chronologically, and the writer takes the reader through the day from “10:00 a.m.” to “then I went home . . .” Some good transitions are used, such as “After that,” “Once we were all finished,” and “At that time.” In other places, though, the writer relies on overusing “Then.”

Sentences and words are effective and functional. A few stand-outs are the sentence “We took a journey down into a wash nearby and saw all of the leftover brush on the sides of it.” and words such as demolished, debris, refreshing, snapshot, and reward. The voice and tone shows commitment to the topic. “We even put some rocks around some plants, so no one could step on them.” While this sentence shows commitment, it also contains one other flaw that should be avoided: the overuse of “some.” “Some” is used 6 times and “something” is used 2 times in the response.

The writer has good control of conventions, with very few errors. Paragraphing is absent and could have aided the reader in following the story had it been used. Also, one glaring pronoun antecedent error shows up at the end. “. . . they got us pizza.” Who are the “they” the writer is telling about? The correct use of parenthesis stands out.

Overall, this response is a good demonstration of grade level writing. It does show the writing skill that a Grade 6 student needs to “Meet” the standard.

## Grade 6 Student paper scored with the Holistic Rubric Based on 6 Traits

Score Point 6

Final Copy

It was a Saturday afternoon when my mom asked me to go and get the mail. Everything seemed normal, but I didn't know that going out to get the mail would lead to the greatest thing I've ever done.

I raced across the steaming hot cement with small, quick steps, and waved to my neighbor who was across the street playing with her nephew, James. Little James was around three years old and he was playing with his favorite ball.

As I opened the rickety mailbox, I heard someone call my neighbor in the house. She got up and walked slowly toward the door. I could tell that she was unsure about if she wanted to leave little James outside or not. So, she just stepped in the doorway to talk to whomever called her.

While she had her back facing the child, James started bouncing the ball. The ball started to bounce across the street and the toddler chased after it. Then, I started to hear the roar of a truck's engine. I twisted around and saw a big, black Toyota speeding down the street. Without thinking I ran to the waddling baby, picked him up, and dove out of the way as the speeding truck roared by.

After hearing all of the ruckus, my neighbor turned around and saw James and I lying in her yard. She hurried to us and asked me what had happened. After I told her, she hugged me so tightly that I could hardly breathe.

The next day I was awarded with a medal to



## Grade 6 Score Point 6, page 2

## Final Copy

congratulate me on my quick actions. It felt great to be  
recognized for my good deeds.

**Grade 6 Score Point 6, page 3**

The writer begins the story hinting to the reader that something will happen: “. . . the greatest thing I’ve ever done.” This pulls the reader into the story by making him/her wonder what this “greatest thing” is. The following paragraphs take the reader through the events, leading to a conclusion that provides closure “It felt great to be recognized for my good deeds.” The vivid details make the story come alive for the reader as the incident unfolds logically and chronologically.

The writer creates each part of the story with excellent description. Words, phrases, and sentences make the rich details stand out. “I raced across the steaming hot cement with small quick steps . . .” brings a hot summer day to the mind of the reader. The “rickety mailbox” is more appealing than the “mailbox.” As the neighbor “walked slowly toward the door,” the writer explains the slowness of the walk “I could tell that she was unsure about if she wanted to leave little James outside or not.” The use of action verbs keeps the story lively: raced, twisted, dove, and hurried. The variation in sentence beginnings and structure make the meaning clear. “Without thinking I ran to the waddling baby, picked him up, and dove out of the way as the speeding truck raced by.”

The tone and voice of the story are straightforward, and the writer does not attempt to create any more action than what takes place. The story is not overdone.

Conventions are well done, especially internal commas which help to guide the reader from sentence to sentence, idea to idea. “After hearing all the ruckus, my neighbor turned around and saw James and I lying in her yard.”

While this story may appear to be simplistic, the sophistication of the sentence structure and the vivid description offers an appealing and clear account of an event that happened in just minutes.

The writing is not perfect, and some errors may be found; however, the skillful retelling of this experience makes the reader forgive a few errors.